

CITY COUNCIL MEETING

AGENDA ITEM I



**CITY OF FRANKLIN
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

February 4, 2013 City Council Meeting

Subject: Approval of Minutes

Motion: "I move that the Franklin City Council approves the minutes of the January 7, 2013 City Council Meeting and the 2013 Inaugural Program."

Mayor calls for a second, discussion and the vote.

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January 7, 2013
6:00 p.m.

Franklin City Hall

God Bless America
Serendipity Singers

Franklin Fire Department Color Guard will present the Colors

Salute to the Flag

**National Anthem Presented By:
Serendipity Singers**

2012 City Council Business

Public Hearing

Community Development Block Grant Project – Funds up to \$500,000 annually is available on a competitive basis for economic development, up to \$500,000 for public facility and housing projects, and up to \$350,000 for emergency activities. Up to \$12,000 is available for feasibility study grants. The two consecutive public hearings are to receive public comment.

The Mayor indicated that Community Development Block Grant funds are available to municipalities through the NH Community Development Finance Authority, up to \$500,000 annually is available on a competitive basis for economic development, up to \$500,000 for public facility and housing projects, and up to \$350,000 for emergency activities for low and moderate purposes. Up to \$12,000 is available for feasibility study grants.

1. This is an application to the Community Development Finance Authority for up to \$450,000 in Community Development Block Grant funds. The City will retain up to \$25,000 for administrative costs and the remaining funds, up to \$425,000 will be sub-granted to the TRIP Center for renovations to the Bessie Rowell Community Center where they intend to relocate. The TRIP Center serves primarily low to moderate income households. This project conforms with Franklin's Housing and Community Development Plans goals of: Addressing public facility and social service improvements and coordination that will benefit the resident of Franklin. (Long term & Short Term goals). The request is for up to \$450,000.

The Mayor asked for public comment. There was no one from the public to speak on this matter.

2. Residential Antidisplacement and Relocation Assistant Plan. Although this project does not involve any displacement or relocation of persons or businesses, if the City were to undertake a CBDG for displacement or relocation, then we would need to follow this plan. The plan outlines the measures that the City would utilize to find comparable or suitable housing for persons or businesses that were displaced or relocated by this project.

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The Mayor asked for public comment. There was no one from the public to speak on this matter.

I.

The City Council to consider the minutes of the December 3, 2012 City Council Meeting.

Councilor Desrochers moved and Council Cournoyer seconded that the Franklin City Council approves the minutes of the December 3, 2012 City Council Meeting. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Adjournment

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Desrochers seconded that the Franklin City Council adjourn the 2012 Council Meeting. All were in favor and the motion passed.

2013 INAUGURAL PROGRAM

Invocation

Reverend Glen Carter conducted the Invocation

Swearing In of Councilors:

City Attorney Paul Fitzgerald

Term of Office Three Years

**Councilor-Elect Bob Sharon, Ward I
Councilor-Elect Glen J. Feener, Ward II
Councilor-Elect Scott Clarenbach, Ward III**

Swearing in Board of Education

City Attorney Paul Fitzgerald

Ward I

**Karen Grzelak - One Year
Brian S. Boynton – Three Years**

Ward II

Tamara Feener – Three Years

Ward III

Peter M. Heath – Three Years (was not present at this time and was sworn in later in the evening by City Clerk Holly Burbank)

State of the City

Mayor Ken Merrifield

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Jule Finley indicated that nothing means more to them than the City of Franklin, besides our family. She stated she came here 19 years ago, and got her job at the high school. She has never regretted this choice. She has met the most amazing people within the school, community and church. She thanked the City for this honor.

Jack Finley reiterated what his wife stated. He stated there are so many things, the people and everything and they love this place. He stated they said it best in the song from Annie "I think I'm going to like it here". He thanked the City!

Benediction "Battle Hymn of the Republic"

Serendipity Singers

Reception and Refreshments

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Public Comment

Mayor Merrifield turned the microphone first over to Councilor Boyd. Councilor Boyd stated that we have been discussing some great things that have taken place in the City of Franklin, but that maybe we should take a few minutes of silence for the families, friends, children, and victims of Newtown CT.

A moment of silence was then taken.

Mayor Merrifield stated that he would now open the meeting up to Public Comment. He stated that each person will be kept to a max time of three minutes and that the entire public comment portion of the meeting would not take up more than 30 minutes.

Mr. Al Warner stated that he noticed on the agenda, that item number 4 is about ward lines and voting locations. He stated that in light of what has happened in Newtown CT it may be a good idea to remove the ward 3 voting location from the school. He stated that it is a security issue of having the general public in the building while school is in session.

Leigh Webb indicated the issue of DES public hearing was held here, and the notice that was published, did the city councilors get that. The municipal association has addressed electronic communication, instead of published, as there is no cost involved.

Mr. Webb stated that on a monthly basis he is meeting with the folks at the SAU 18 office. He stated he also met with the SAU 59 to get some input from their side and he stated he will continue to do that.

Leigh Webb stated he is in email contact with Dawn Gamache, regarding the Northern Pass, and the use the NH residence would get out of it, and that it hasn't been established as of this time. He stated finding out what use the state would get out of the Northern Pass is a huge component in promoting it.

He stated that on the agenda there is a resolution the council will be discussing later in the meeting. He stated that he appreciates the cities concern about the funding, but that he also would suggest

that if the City Council passes the resolution then they be part of the process of deciding the source from which those funds would come.

Leigh Webb also wanted to point out to the Council that after Governor Hassan made her inaugural address, there was an element in the address that there were needs within the state that were not properly funded. He stated that Senator Peter Bradley, who is the president of the Senate, was asked to comment on that portion of her speech and he stated that to his knowledge there are no needs that haven't been funded. If the Council passes this then they should send a copy to Senator Bradley, so that he knows that there are several issues that are unfunded and need to be brought to their attention.

Leigh Webb stated that there were some typos in this that need to be fixed.

No further public comment.

I.

City Council to consider the scheduling of a public hearing on Ordinance #07-13 concerning Chapter 4, Administrative Code.

Councilor Feener moved and Council Desrochers seconded that the Franklin City Council schedule a public hearing for Monday, February 4th, 2013, at 6:05 p.m. regarding Ordinance #07-13 concerning Chapter 4 Administrative Code.

City Manager Dragon stated that all of the areas of the City code that they are looking at amended were in the packet, which was available on line. She stated the changes were highlighted. She stated that in most cases the wording is being changed, such as changing Planning Director to Planning Administrator. She stated the current Code states that the Finance Office oversees other departments and this will be changed. She stated the totality of changes is available and highlighted on the website in the council packet.

There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

II.

City Council to consider Resolution #06-13 supporting legislation to authorize restored funding to the State Aide Grant Program's eligible projects.

Councilor Trudell moves and Councilor Cournoyer that the City of Franklin City Council approve Resolution 06-13 supporting legislation to fully authorize restored funding to the State Aide Grant program's eligible projects and continue to advance legislative efforts that will provide over the long term a funding mechanism to support these infrastructure projects critical to maintaining the quality of life in our State.

There was a roll call vote of the council and all were in favor.

Mayor Merrifield then read into the minutes Resolution 06-13 in full.

RESOLUTION #06-13

WHEREAS, the State Legislature has historically supported municipal wastewater, public drinking water and landfill closure projects through the State Aid Grant program administered by the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services; and

WHEREAS, the public derives significant benefits from municipal infrastructure systems including improved public health, public safety, environmental protection and also monetary benefits to our state and local economies from local growth, recreation and tourism; and

WHEREAS, the City of Franklin participates in the Winnepesaukee River Basin Program and recognizes the importance of environmental quality advanced by projects supported by the State Aid Grant program finding it necessary for a healthy and sustainable community; and

WHEREAS, pursuant to RSA 486 and RSA 485-A the State Legislature has expressly authorized a grant program for municipalities to receive from 20% to 30% of assistance toward principal and interest payments on eligible infrastructure projects; and

WHEREAS, local government officials and citizens faithfully relied on the State's commitment to this funding partnership that was created by the Legislature to make these environmental infrastructure investments more affordable at the local level; and

WHEREAS, the Legislature since October, 2008 has deferred all state appropriations to the State Aid Grant program resulting in 124 eligible municipal projects, constructed in reliance of grant funding, but not receiving any funding in state fiscal year 2009, 2010, 2011 and 2012; and

WHEREAS, the backlog of eligible municipal projects includes 100 wastewater projects totaling more than \$46 million, 17 public water supply projects totaling more than \$7.5 million, and 7 landfill projects totaling more than \$800,000 in grant requests; and

RESOLUTION #06-13

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WHEREAS, the New Hampshire Municipal Association has adopted a Legislative Policy position to support future legislative that requests the state fulfill its existing statutory obligations to municipalities.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Franklin hereby respectfully requests the city's representatives, state senator, other members of the county delegation and governor support legislative that will be filed in the 2013 legislative session and which will authorize fully restored funding to the State Aid Grant program's eligible deferred projects and continue to advance legislative efforts that will provide over the long term a funding mechanism to support these infrastructure projects critical to maintaining the quality of life in our state.

III.

City Council to consider 2013 Contract between the City of Franklin and Jane Sanders Searches.

Councilor Trudell moved and Councilor Feener seconded that the Franklin City Council approve the 2013 contract between the City of Franklin and Jane Sanders Searches. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

IV.

Discussion concerning ward lines and voting locations.

Mayor Merrifield indicated that Mr. Warner had discussed this earlier this evening. Mayor Merrifield stated that he was approached by the school district some time prior to the last set of elections regarding districts and students safety surrounding having voting at the middle school. Opening the doors to the general public while school is in session is a concern. This was discussed with the superintendent.

Mayor Merrifield stated that the problem is the voting must take place in the ward. He stated that the ward lines were changed in the past based on this. The suggestion of the school department was to move the voting to Rowell School. This facility however is located in Ward 2, so it is the same problem that was approached previously.

Also the wards are spelled out in our City Charter, so in order to make changes to this Mayor Merrifield stated that the process is easier if the City Council proposes amendments to the City charter and place it on the ballot.

Councilor Feener indicated that he wasn't aware of any issues with the voting at the middle school. He stated the suggestion is to move the location from one location with children to another location that will have children. He stated he would like to get some feedback from the school.

Councilor Desrochers stated he agrees with Councilor Feener. He asked about how they could secure the building and keep the voters away from the rest of the school.

Al Warner was present. He stated that he wasn't sure how hard it would be to secure the voting area from the rest of the school. He stated that currently you have to walk into the heart of the school as voting takes place in the library. Members of the Council asked for clarification as they thought voting took place in the gym. Mr. Warner stated it is sometimes in the library and

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sometimes in the gym. It was indicated by Councilor Desrochers that it would be easier to just secure the door to the gym that leads into the lobby of the school and have voters enter directly into the gym from the outer doors off the gym. Mr. Warner stated he is not sure on the construction of the gym and that in the past they have come in the front door of the school, into the lobby and then either into the gym or the library.

Holly Burbank, City Clerk, stated that during the last election she had received correspondence from the Superintendent that at the middle school, elections will always be held in the gym.

Councilor Desrochers stated that if they use the exterior direct entrances into the gym, and secure the doors that lead into the school itself, then everyone should be safe.

Councilor Boyd stated that there are school resources officer and regular officers that can be utilized to make sure that people are not getting into the main portion of the school and that the school is secured. He stated that Councilor Feener is correct.

Mr. Warner stated that after what has happened at schools, the school administrators, principal and superintendent are obligated to do everything that they can to secure the student population. Voting is not a primary part of their concern. The primary concern is the safety of the students. He stated the school resource officer is not at the school 100% of the time, and there are 2 other schools.

Councilor Boyd indicated that the most important thing to remember is that a law enforcement officer in the school will deter this type of thing from taking place. Mr. Warner stated he is not qualified to discuss the security, but that he is concerned. He stated that to consider removing the voting from the school is what they are requesting.

Councilor Clarenbach stated he brought this to the Mayor's attention. He stated to bring this to the school board for a full discussion is a good idea.

Councilor Cournoyer indicated that the Council was required to be present during the voting. He stated that while he was there, the resource officer or a police officer there from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. and when he left the officer was still there. He stated they shouldn't redesign Franklin, as this works, and that better security of the voting area by qualified personnel is fine.

Councilor Dzujna stated that he is all for protecting the kids. He stated that at Bessie Rowell Community Center there are even more young kids. He stated his suggestion to the school administration is to schedule teacher's conferences for voting days so that the kids aren't in the school and there would be no issue about safety.

Councilor Sharon stated he doesn't see a big problem with securing the gym area. He stated the gym meets fire codes with two exits on either side of the building, that don't exit into the school. Secure the main doors to the school and there ends the problems. A police officer standing inside at the double doors that lead into the school will deter anyone from going in.

Councilor Cournoyer stated that the tragedy in Connecticut the school did not have an officer in the school. During voting there is an officer in the school.

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Mayor Merrifield stated his purpose in bringing this to the Council was to get a feeling for the superintendent on whether the council is willing to hire a surveying company to come in and survey land areas to re-write ward lines and voting locations. He stated it appears the council is not willing to do this.

Holly Burbank stated she called the Secretary of State that if a ward line changes population at all then legislature could possibly be involved in this change, so it's not as simple as is thought. It was indicated that this would not change population, as it isn't a boundary line change, just a ward location change.

It was indicated that Holly should be kept in the loop with this process. It was indicated that there may be rules governing access to bathrooms and usage of the bathrooms in the corridor. It was asked that Holly check into this.

It was indicated that if the SRO officer and another officer are on the site during voting and that they both should be at the middle school during voting.

Mayor Merrifield indicated he is not getting the impression that the Council wants to send this to the legislative committee. The time line is tight and with the restrictions of the ward lines and a place that is large enough to host the voting. It was indicated that the Rowell School and Middle School may be on the same lot and were possibly merged at some point, which if so then the ward lines would not have to be changed.

Tamara Feener, spoke as the Moderator. She stated that some of the biggest questions will be if Rowell School is up to code as far as for elections, because this could make the determination. She stated that Ward 2 use to be at the community center, but as the building was not up to code it had to be moved to City Hall.

Mayor Merrifield indicated that it appears the Council would like input from the school board.

Councilor Desrochers indicated it should be brought up to the school about the officers being present and the closing off of the gym area.

V.

City Council to consider the scheduling of a public hearing for the Proposed Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive.

Councilor Desrochers moved and Councilor Trudell seconded that the Franklin City Council schedule a public hearing for 6:06 p.m. on Monday, February 4, 2013, to take public comments on the possible adoption of the provisions of RSA 79-E, the Community Revitalization Tax Relief Incentive Program. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

VI.

Other Business

Manager's Update

City Manager Dragon indicated that on the table this evening there was a copy of the proposed budget. Also wanted to let the council know, at the last meeting it was discussed about the drug task force position and they are at the interview process currently. She stated that lastly, she wanted to let the council know she is pursuing a lobbyist for the Northern Pass Project, she stated there are a lot of discussions being held on the state level that could affect the northern pass project. She stated they are looking into this currently, and that there is approximately \$1,000 available for lobbying for the Northern Pass. Mayor Merrifield stated that this is absolutely needed and based on not know what could happen at the State level, it is a great idea to have someone down at the State lobbying for the City. It was indicated by City Manager Dragon that things happen at the State level every day that could affect the Northern Pass and the City.

Leigh Webb stated that there is a list of email addresses.

Mayor Appointment – Planning Board

Mayor Merrifield stated that there is only one new appointment to the Planning Board. *Mayor Merrifield reappointed Timothy Stangroom as an Alternate on the Planning Board. Term of Service to January, 2016.*

He stated that he was also made aware this evening that as Councilor Bob Sharon is the City Council Alternate, appointed by the Council. His term ended with his term as Council in January and as he won the reelection, the Council could reappoint him to the Planning Board.

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Desrochers seconded that Councilor Sharon be Council Representative to the Planning Board for his term of office. All were in favor and the motion passed.

City Council Appoints – Zoning Board

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Sharon seconded to reappoint Donald Gagnon to the Zoning Board, but as a regular member, Term of Service to January, 2014. There was no further discussion. Council Clarenbach was not in favor of this appointment, all others were in favor and the motion passed.

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Desrochers seconded to reappoint Floyd Sargent to the Zoning Board, Term of Service to January, 2015. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Sharon seconded to reappoint Kathlene A. Fleckenstein to the Zoning Board, Term of Service of January, 2016. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Sharon seconded to nominate Kirk Johnston as an Alternate to the Zoning Board, Term of Service to January 2016. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Late Item

City Council to consider votes necessary to apply for up to \$450,000 of a CDBG Grant Funds on behalf of the TRIP Center for renovations to Bessie Rowell School as part of the Bessie Rowell Community Center project.

Mayor Merrifield indicated that this is a late item and a public hearing was held on this item at the beginning of the meeting.

Councilor Desrochers moved and Councilor Feener seconded that the Franklin City Council adopt the Antidisplacement and Relocation Assistance Plan. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Councilor Desrochers moved and Councilor Trudell seconded that the Franklin City Council approve the submittal of the application and vote to authorize the City Manager to sign and submit the application, and upon approval of the CDBG application, authorize the City Manager to execute any documents which may be necessary to effectuate the CDBG contract. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

City Manager Dragon indicated there was one further item.

Mayor Merrifield indicated that there was the submission of a second late item, regarding involuntary lot mergers.

Adoption of Policy for the Processing of Involuntary Lot Merger Requests

Richard Lewis stated that there was legislation changes a few years ago, that if City or Town merged one or more lots of a property owner involuntarily without their direct approval or consent, the statute has been written a process to restore those lots to their individual status. In looking at the statute and in speaking with the City Attorney, a formal request is made to the City Council with an appeal process written in. Paul Fitzgerald thought and I concur with him that having a written request, as a matter of record in case of a future appeal. The seven items of the policy are:

1. The property owner shall submit a written request to restore the lots in question.
2. The request shall provide supporting materials [deeds, plans, maps,] that describe the lots in question and support the request for the restoration of the merged lots.
3. The request shall be submitted to the City Council. Once the request is received the item shall be placed on the agenda of the Council for either a regularly scheduled meeting or for a workshop meeting. The scheduling shall be coordinated between the City Manager and the Mayor. The property owner making the request will be notified of the date and time of the discussion.
4. A copy of the request and the supporting materials shall be distributed to the Assessing Office and the Planning & Zoning Office for review; any comments from these departments shall be submitted in writing to the City manager's office.
5. The person making the request may make additional comments or other presentations at the meeting. Any written comments from any City department shall be entered into the record. City staff may make any additional comments at the meeting.

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6. Following any comments or presentation, the City Council shall close the discussion. A final decision by the City Council may be made immediately following the close of the discussion. The City Council reserves the right to continue the decision making process to its next meeting in order to allow for further consideration of all of the evidence.
7. Any person aggrieved by the decision of the City Council may appeal to the Zoning Board of Adjustment in accordance with the provisions of RSA 676.

Richard Lewis stated that this is a pretty simple process.

It was asked if this applies to lots prior to 2010 that were merged and it was indicated that it was. It was asked about lots after 2010 that get unmerged, so they don't have to go through an appeal process. Richard stated that once this legislation was passed that no town or city not unmerge the lots. It has been on the books a voluntary lot merger process, a simple process approved only by the Planning Administrator and recorded at Merrimack County Registry of Deeds, and if this was done, then these lots would not be able to follow this process. This legislation is only for involuntary mergers. If a lot was merged proactively by the owner, then these lots would not be unmerged.

Councilor Feener moved and Councilor Cournoyer seconded that the Franklin City Council approve the proposed policy for the processing of requests per RSA 674:39-aa for the restoration of involuntarily merged lots. There was no further discussion. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Adjournment

Councilor Starkweather moved and Councilor Feener seconded to adjourn. All were in favor and the motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela M. Carey
Planning and Zoning
Assistant to the Administrator.



CITY OF FRANKLIN, NEW HAMPSHIRE

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

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January 7, 2013

Pastor Carter, members of the City Council for 2012 and 2013, City Manager Dragon and Department Directors, honored School Board members, friends, and fellow citizens of the Best City on Earth:

In crafting my words for tonight's address, I tried to choose between two themes: Progress. And Sacrifice. In the end, I couldn't decide and chose both.

When looking back over the last year in our City, it is truly stunning to see the great scope of our progress in yet very difficult economic times.

We have seen professional and institutional, technological and physical progress with our municipal and school Departments. And there, in our neighborhoods, the same is true for Franklin's countless fraternal and community organizations. I therefore cite just a few special examples of our progress...

Through Franklin perseverance, character, and strength, we are State Champions in football once again. We admire the progress and determination demonstrated by our young people in that amazing "come-from-behind" Tornado season.

A structure that might have remained a vacant shell is now vibrant with activity and the investment of hundreds of thousands of new grant dollars. The Bessie Rowell Community Center will be a welcoming home for our youngest - and eldest - residents and it will be a monument to community.

Crossing the river to the west, we have completed work now on another wonderful monument - a monument to science and progress and our most precious natural resource: our water. Let every investor know, there is plenty of it

Franklin - The Three Rivers City

here, and you should also know that State officials in Concord can be overheard saying that the cleanest drinking water in New Hampshire is now found in Franklin. To quote Mayor Tony Giunta: "We are the 'Saudi Arabia' of water."

These and our other accomplishments could not be achieved without sacrifice. I am personally grateful to Manager Elizabeth Dragon and her superlative staff for their leadership and dedication. I am equally grateful to our City Councilors, our leaders in learning and our educators, and to the quiet Franklin heroes who simply rise each day and work to improve the lives of their families and all in this city.

On October 27, we re-dedicated Roger S. Martin field behind Franklin High School at the birthplace of the Merrimack River. We did so in honor of a young man who disappeared in action in the South Pacific in World War Two. His parents were informed of their loss on Thanksgiving Day 1942. Tonight, I wear a remembrance of him, given to me by his family.

On December 1, the NH Chapter of "Honor & Remember" came to the Veterans Memorial Ski Area and celebrated two other sons of Franklin who gave their lives for the United States and the flag we saluted earlier in this historic room.

Staff Sergeant Joseph Andrew Rayno was born in Franklin in 1940 and was KIA on December 29, 1966. His family, as most of you know, has deep and abiding roots in this building and in this City.

Marine Lance Corporal Jedh Colby Barker was born here in 1945. He was the only NH recipient of the Medal of Honor in the Vietnam conflict. The story of his last day reads something like this in the citation by the President of the United States:

"Corporal Barker's squad was hit by enemy sniper fire. The squad ... advanced to a strongly fortified enemy position, when it was again struck by ... automatic weapons fire... Although wounded by the initial burst of fire, Barker boldly remained in the open, returning accurate fire on the numerically superior force. He was again wounded ... and ... suddenly ... an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the ... Marines ... Corporal Barker threw himself upon the ... grenade,

absorbing ... the full ... force of the explosion... He crawled to the side of a wounded comrade and administered first aid before succumbing to his ... [own] wounds."

The state of our City is great and strong, because the people here are very much like Martin, Rayno, and Barker.

The challenges we face in 2013 will no doubt be serious and profound. But I submit to everyone that, whether the issue is infrastructure replacement and repair, or it is city-school relations, or it is budgeting in a difficult economy - we will be asked to sacrifice much less than Corporal Barker, or Staff Sergeant Rayno, or Staff Sergeant Martin.

But wouldn't we honor the true spirit of Franklin to emulate Jedh Barker - and use our last bit of energy and strength to help a friend?

Let us follow the instructions that the Apostle gave to the Philippians from his prison cell: "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves..." (Philippians 2:3)

With God's help and yours, that's exactly what we will do in the coming year. May He bless each of you, and our wonderful City. Thank you.

Our Citizen of the Year

Progress and sacrifice.

It is a slight bit of a departure to choose two people as "Citizen of the Year", but there has certainly been precedent set in the past, and I think you'll agree that this married couple are a team very deserving of the honor.

Since they are both educators, it seemed natural for me to turn to students, past and present, to explain why these teachers are "Citizens of the Year" every year.

Meaghan says: "[They] are the most important people in my life. They introduced me and made me realize my love for theater, which in itself has given me more memories than I can count. Their passion for their jobs is inspiring, as well as their love for their students. Whenever someone seems "off", they take it upon themselves to check on them, and insure them they're always there to help. They're such selfless, compassionate, and loving people, I don't know what I'd do without them."

John told me: "They're two of the most selfless individuals I know. No matter your background, where you've been, or your reputation, they give you the chance to make something of yourself. They've instilled in me a sense of who I am that I would have never been able to find without their guidance and wisdom. I'm eternally thankful for what the two of them have done for this community, whether it has impacted me directly or not, it's always been for the best."

And this from Hon. Rep. Leigh Webb: "If it were not for [their] tireless efforts, along with their dedication to teaching the teenagers of Franklin other subjects, high school drama and community theater would simply not exist to broaden their students' horizons, and by so doing, enrich all of us."

I'd only add that the sacrifices made by this couple for Franklin are numerous and varied. They use their talents in so many ways to accelerate our progress as a community. I could mention my own family and many of my own experiences to illustrate why I have made this choice. But suffice it to say that anyone who can convince the Mayor and other officials to play "basketball" while riding a "donkey" has got some pretty special talents.

Please join me in thanking our "Citizens of the Year", Jack and Jule Finley.